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A RAIN DREAM

THESE strifes, these tumults of the noisy world,
Where Fraud, the coward, tracks his prey by stealth,
And Strength, the ruffian, glories in his guilt,
Oppress the heart with sadness. Oh, my friend,
In what serener mood we look upon
The gloomiest aspects of the elements
Among the woods and fields! Let us awhile,
As the slow wind is rolling up the storm,
In fancy leave this maze of dusty streets,
For ever shaken by the importunate jar
Of commerce, and upon the darkening air
Look from the shelter of our rural home.

Who is not awed that listens to the Rain,
Sending his voice before him? Mighty Rain!
The upland steeps are shrouded by thy mists;
The vales are darkened by thy shade; the pools
No longer glimmer, and the silvery streams
Darken to veins of lead at thy approach.
Oh, mighty Rain! already thou art here;
And every roof is beaten by thy streams,
And as thou passest every glassy spring
Grows rough, and every leaf in all the woods
Is struck and quivers. All the hill-tops slake
Their thirst from thee; a thousand languishing fields,
A thousand fainting gardens are refreshed;
A thousand idle rivulets start to speed,
And with the graver murmur of the storm
Blend their light voices as they hurry on.

Thou fill'st the circle of the atmosphere
Alone; there is no living thing abroad,
No bird to wing the air, nor beast to walk
The field; the squirrel in the forest seeks
His hollow tree; the marmot of the field
Has scampered to his den; the butterfly
Hides under his broad leaf; the insect crowds
That made the sunshine populous, lie close
In their mysterious shelters, whence the sun
Will summon them again. The mighty Rain
Holds the vast empire of the sky alone.

I shut my eyes, and see, as in a dream,
The friendly clouds drop down spring violets
And summer columbines, and all the flowers
That tuft the woodland floor, or overarch
The streamlet:—spiky grass for genial June,
Brown harvests for the waiting husbandman,
And, for the woods a deluge of fresh leaves.

I see these myriad drops that slake the dust,
Gathered in glorious streams, or rolling blue
In billows on the lake or on the deep,
And bearing navies. I behold them change
To threads of crystal as they sink in earth,
And leave its stains behind to rise again
In pleasant nooks of verdure, where the child,
Thirsty with play, in both his little hands
Shall take the cool clear water, raising it
To wet his pretty lips. To-morrow noon
How proudly will the water-lily ride
The brimming pool, o'erlooking, like a queen,
Her circle of broad leaves. In lonely wastes,
When next the sunshine makes them beautiful,
Gay troops of butterflies shall light to drink
At the replenished hollows of the rock.

Now slowly falls the leaden night, and still,
All through the starless hours, the mighty Rain
Smites with perpetual sound the forest leaves,
And beats the matted grass, and still the earth
Drinks the unstinted bounty of the clouds,
Drinks for her cottage wells, her woodland brooks,
Drinks for the springing trout, the toiling bee
And brooding bird, drinks for her tender flowers,
Tall oaks, and all the herbage of her hills.

A melancholy sound is in the air,
A deep sigh in the distance, a shrill wail
Around my dwelling. 'Tis the wind of night;
A lonely wanderer between earth and cloud,
In the black shadow and the chilly mist,
Along the streaming mountain side, and through
The dripping woods, and o'er the plashy fields,
Roaming and sorrowing still, like one who makes
The journey of life alone, and nowhere meets
A welcome or a friend, and still goes on
In darkness. Yet awhile, a little while,
And he shall toss the glittering leaves in play,
And dally with the flowers, and gaily lift
The slender herbs, pressed low by weight of rain,
And drive, in joyous triumph, through the sky,
White clouds, the laggard remnants of the storm.

WILLIAM C. BRYANT.

THE CASTLE BY THE SEA.

FROM THE GERMAN OF UHLAND.

HAST thou beheld the Castle—
The high one by the Sea?
Of golden tint and ruddy are
The clouds that round it be.

It seems as it might vanish
In the mirrored waves below;
Or be exhaled and disappear,
In the evening welkin's glow.

"Indeed, have I beheld it—
The Castle by the Sea;
The white moon shining overhead,
And mists that round it be."

The winds and heaving ocean
Made they a merry din?
And didst thou hear the sound of harps
And festival within?

"Nay—the winds and eke the waves
Lay in profoundest sleep;
And in the hall I heard a dirge,
So sad I fain must weep."

Saw'st thou the Monarch walking
On the terrace with the Queen;
Their scarlet mantles flowing,
Their crowns of golden sheen?

Led they not with rapture,
A charming maiden there;
Glorious as the sunlight,
Radiant with golden hair?

"I saw the elder couple;
But uncrowned, I wot;
In blackest garb of mourning;—
The Maiden saw I not."